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BCPSEA Responses to BCTF and Local Teachers' Association Statements

Statements made by the BCTF President during an interview on CFX Radio's Morning Show with Al Ferraby, Friday, August 30, 2019, are inaccurate and require correction.

Statement	BCPSEA Response
<p>"...teachers spent 16 years in court winning back our language that was unconstitutionally stripped. So what we didn't expect to face in this round of bargaining was concessions around that language. And so teachers aren't willing to roll back student learning conditions. What we're trying to do is improve learning conditions."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Supreme Court of Canada decision said that both parties have a right to negotiate changes to language, including the restored language, which comprises teacher workload provisions. ▪ The restored language dates back to the 1980s and no longer fits the way classrooms today are organized. ▪ BCPSEA has not tabled concessions — the BCTF appears to describe any proposal put forward by the employer as a concession while describing their own proposals as "improvements." ▪ Our proposals and discussions have been clear that we want to ensure fair and reasonable workload supports for teachers while ensuring school districts can effectively address individual students' learning needs. ▪ BCPSEA has three proposals to address teacher staffing, which are to be read as a package — NO teacher in the province would lose their job as a result of our package. ▪ The BCPSEA package proposed a baseline class size and the ability to provide additional resources to allow school districts, through discussions at the local level with their teachers, to lower the baseline class size and/or to customize the workload supports that work best for the teachers in that particular learning environment. ▪ As part of this package, to address concerns expressed by the BCTF, BCPSEA also proposed a process to allow local teachers' unions to examine the package as a whole and to "opt-in" or "opt-out" prior to any final settlement. ▪ BCPSEA is so confident that our non-enrolling teacher proposal would not result in job losses that on July 11, we tabled a proposal that included a clause guaranteeing staffing stability for school districts. ▪ Teachers' working conditions are not the same as student learning conditions — student learning conditions are determined by policy set by the Ministry of Education and locally elected boards of education in the province's 60 public school districts, as well as the hard work of school district management staff and teachers, not through the collective agreement.

<p>“...And one of the problems we’re encountering is that we’re just not able to recruit teachers from other jurisdictions in Canada because of our low pay and high cost of living.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This statement is inaccurate — the Teacher Regulation Branch, as the organization responsible for certifying teachers in BC, indicates that BC is experiencing a net inflow of teachers from other provinces. ▪ The general wage increase available under the government compensation mandate for public sector bargaining is the largest wage offer for public sector employees since 2006 and the second largest in the past 20 years. ▪ In addition, BCPSEA has proposed other options available to the parties to increase the teachers’ salary grids within the government compensation mandate and the current collective agreement.
<p>“Teachers in BC are the lowest paid in the western provinces and the second lowest paid teachers nationally, in the province with one of the highest costs of living. So it’s no wonder that teachers from other places aren’t coming to fill the gap.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As referenced above, this statement is inaccurate — the Teacher Regulation Branch, which is the organization responsible for certifying teachers in BC, indicates that BC is experiencing a net inflow of teachers from other provinces. ▪ “Sandra Johnson, lead bargainer of the Alberta Teachers’ Association, said using the Calgary Board of Education’s wages as an average, teachers with five years of education and 10 years of experience earn an annual salary of \$97,372 in the province, which has no cap on class sizes.” (Source: (“School returns in BC with uncertainty surrounding contract for teachers,” <i>The Vancouver Sun</i>, September 1, 2019; Collective Agreement between The Board of Trustees of the Calgary Board of Education –and– the Alberta Teachers’ Association) ▪ “Ms. Mooring said BC teachers with similar credentials are paid about \$92,000, suggesting the higher salary in Alberta could lure them to the neighbouring province [BC], though Ms. Johnston said there’s no indication that is happening.” (Source: (“School returns in BC with uncertainty surrounding contract for teachers,” <i>The Vancouver Sun</i>, September 1, 2019) ▪ It is important to emphasize that there is NO class size language in the public school system in Alberta; when compared with Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, BC is the only jurisdiction with class size language in the collective agreement. ▪ Further, NO other jurisdiction in Canada has composition language in its teacher collective agreement. ▪ As noted above, the general wage increase available under the government compensation mandate for public sector bargaining is the largest wage offer for public sector employees since 2006 and the second largest in the past 20 years. ▪ In addition, BCPSEA has proposed other options available to the parties to increase the teachers’ salary grids within the government compensation mandate and the current collective agreement.
<p>“So what has happened is when our language came back, not every district has class size language, for example, and so we’re looking to make some improvements, not roll conditions back.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It’s important to note that the collective agreement belongs to BOTH parties — the province’s 60 public school districts and the teachers’ union — not just the union. ▪ The employers’ proposals do not “roll conditions back” — they are designed to allow school districts, through discussions at the local level with their teachers, to lower the baseline class size and/or to customize the workload supports that work best for the teachers in that particular learning environment. ▪ One-third of the province’s 60 public school districts do not have class composition language — those districts have been better able to consistently provide a high level of services to students. ▪ The old language leads to unnecessary arbitrations, given that in many cases it’s impossible to implement because language terms and classroom conditions have changed since the language was negotiated in the 1980s.

<p>“We need to just encourage the employer and government to take the concessions off the table and to really focus on getting a deal.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The employer does not have concessions on the table — the BCTF continues to characterize the employers’ bargaining proposals and discussions as concessions while describing its own proposals as “improvements.”▪ At the outset of bargaining in February, on multiple occasions BCPSEA asked the BCTF to consider engaging a facilitator to assist the parties in bargaining — the BCTF declined.▪ After over 50 bargaining sessions, in an effort to move the parties toward meaningful and productive discussions, in June BCPSEA applied to the Labour Relations Board to appoint a mediator.▪ The parties have now engaged in over 60 bargaining sessions, including 13 sessions with the assistance of the mediator.▪ BCPSEA is trying to engage the BCTF in negotiations by presenting a number of different options for discussion and considering the issues expressed by the union.▪ The BCTF has not indicated any interest in discussing the needs of employer school districts and has tabled proposals that cannot realistically be implemented, either from a financial, capital, or human resource perspective.▪ We know that solutions to these complex issues will only be found through productive discussions at the bargaining table, rather than through a public relations campaign in the media.
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